

edward johnson building
faculty of music
university of toronto



THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO CONCERT CHOIR

JOHN TUTTLE, *Conductor*

WALTER HALL

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1978, AT 3 P.M.

PROGRAM

MESSE en sol majeur

Francis Poulenc

Kyrie
Gloria
Sanctus
Benedictus
Agnus Dei

Francis Poulenc once confessed to a friend that he had the faith of a country priest. Thus we have a personal confession of the enigma in the character of this sophisticated and distinguished member of the avant garde group, Les Six. Poulenc, whose personality has been described as the blending of an intense religious-fervour and a flippant hedonistic attitude to life, was the composer of several outstanding religious works. The Messe en sol majeur, composed in 1937, was the second of these works and was preceded by the popular Litanies a la Vierge Noir (1936), which was composed after a pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame de Rocamadour. Poulenc's enigmatic personality is vividly depicted in the style of his religious works. In the Mass each successive phrase of music tends to vacillate between a sense of mystical transport tinged with an affected lyricism and a declamatory, almost rude vitality. Poulenc's juxtaposition of traditional harmony and dissonance achieves a varied harmonic texture which never fails to capture the listener's attention. Frequently one's natural musical expectations are upset by unpredictable musical turns of phrase. Such is the case, for example, in the Kyrie which commences with an austere passage in octaves, superseded suddenly by a brisk allegro which quickly modulates into a lyrical passage dominated by female voices.

An important element of Poulenc's musical style in the Mass is his treatment of text declamation. The traditional norms of Latin accentuation are distorted in subservience to the musical metre. This distortion is calculated, however, to emphasize the text. Although this technique is consistent throughout the Mass, it is especially effective in the Gloria in excelsis Deo, Hosanna in excelsis, and qui tollis....

Poulenc's heterogeneous musical style in the Mass does not result in musical chaos or disunity, but, rather, in a highly integrated and effective personal style which always stimulates the listener to a contemplation of the liturgical text.

INTERMISSION

KING DAVID

Arthur Honegger

Symphonic Psalm in Three Parts.

After a drama by René Morax

Part I

1. Introduction
2. The Song of David, the Shepherd (Wendy Hedderwick, alto)
3. Psalm: "All praise to Him" (Chorus)
- 3a. Fanfare, Entry of Golaith
4. Song of Victory (Chorus)
5. March
6. Psalm: "In the Lord I put my faith" (James McLean, tenor)
7. Psalm: "O had I wings like a dove" (Brenda Luka, soprano)
8. Song of the Prophets (Chorus)
9. Psalm: "Pity me, Lord!" (James McLean, tenor)
10. Saul's Camp
11. Psalm: "God, the Lord shall be my light" (Chorus)
12. Incantation of the Witch of Endor. (Terry Pitt-Brooke)
13. March of the Philistines
14. Lament of Gilboa (soprano, alto soli and chorus)

Part II

15. Song of the Daughters of Israel (soprano solo and chorus)
16. The Dance before the Ark (Chorus, soprano solo)

Part III

17. Song: "Now my voice in song upsoaring" (Chorus)
 18. Song of the Handmaid (Alto solo)
 19. Psalm of Penitence (Chorus)
 20. Psalm: "Behold, in evil I was born" (Chorus)
 21. Psalm: "O shall I raise mine eyes unto the mountains?" (Tenor solo)
 22. The Song of Ephraim (soprano solo and chorus)
 23. March of the Hebrews
 24. Psalm: "Thee will I love, O Lord" (Chorus)
 25. Psalm: "In my distress" (Chorus)
 26. The Crowning of Solomon
 27. The Death of David (Soprano solo and chorus)
- Narrator: Gregory Cross

In 1921 the Swiss poet René Morax was assured by Ernest Ansermet that the only one of the younger generation of Parisian composers temperamentally suited to compose music for his biblical drama, Le Roi David, was Arthur Honegger.

Morax first approached Honegger on February 25, 1921, who was already interested in biblical subjects, and accepted his proposal without hesitation. The composition of Le Roi David took place under considerable pressure, Honegger had only two months in which to meet his deadline, and had to compose the choruses first as they were most urgently required for early rehearsals. As Honegger composed each page of the score, he would mail it to the publisher who had offered him a contract for the complete work.

The first performance of the musical stage production took place at Morax' theatre in the Swiss town of Mezieres on June 11, 1921. Honegger's musical resources were quite limited and the original score required only a seventeen-member ensemble consisting mainly of woodwinds and percussion.

The new work having been considered a success, Honegger decided two years later to amalgamate his incidental music to Morax' play into an oratorio with a spoken narrator's part to link up the various numbers. He re-scored the work to include the expanded resources of a full orchestra, maintaining, however, the woodwind-dominated sonorities of the original version. The first performance of the new oratorio, or symphonic psalm, as it was called, took place on December 2, 1923.

King David is organized into three tableaux: David the shepherd and warrior, David the dancer before the Ark, and David the king and prophet. The narrator presents the significant events of each section and the chorus and soloists, using psalm paraphrases and original texts, comment upon or take part in the action. Honegger's technique in this regard is similar to that of Handel's oratorios. That Honegger should be interested in a biblical libretto and attracted to the archaic form of the oratorio attests to his artistic independence and his belief in the continuity of Western musical tradition. Stylistically, King David lacks both the subject matter and the familiar musical gestures of Impressionism. Similarly, King David does not conform to the ironic tone and iconoclastic techniques of the avant garde. Honegger's oratorio finds its artistic roots in the oratorios of Handel and the Passions of J.S. Bach. The music expresses itself with a striking simplicity of gesture not lacking, however, in a pervasive lyricism. Honegger demonstrates great skill in creating variety and freshness with

his relatively austere resources of soloists, unison chorus, and woodwind dominated orchestra.

It was Honegger's respect for, and his conscious homage to tradition which in King David distinguish him from his contemporaries in the modernist group, Les Six.

Notes by Norman McBeth

CONCERT CHOIR (1978)

Soprano

Megan Brown
Leslie Jost
Kathy Loree
Vincea McClelland
Lauren McInnis
Ruth Pyper
Debbie Selig
Lisa Sullivan
Cathy Terry
Sung Ha Shin
Donna Bennett

Alto

Karen Bender
Marg Chivers
Agnes Chiu
Auriel Creighton
Mary Dempster
Sylvia Kerr
Suzanne Vanstone

Tenor

Les Dobbin
David Johnston
David McCartney
Terry Pitt-Brooke
Dan Neff (Tenor II or Bar.)

Bass

Allen Derr
Doug Friesen
Ralph McIntosh
Bob McMillan
Bill O'Meara
Peter Schaffter
Pat Timney
Jim Wells

ORCHESTRA FOR KING DAVID (Honegger), Concert Choir Performance
November 19, at 3 p.m.

Flute

Kerry Rittich
Cordula Hacke (picc)

Oboe (E.H.)

David Sussman

Clarinet

Carolyn Horne
Lori Freedman (Bass Cl.)

Bassoon

Peter Hatch

Horn

Diane Fair

Trumpet

Norman Garcia
Elsbeth Carruthers

Trombone

Gordon Griffith

Timpani

John Mele

Percussion

Kenneth Erskine
Jeffry Mason

Double Bass

Viuu Varik

Cello

Olga Van Kranendonk

Celeste

Dean Bradshaw

Organ

Bob Robinson

Piano

Judy Au

Next Event: Music for Trumpet and Tuba, Stephen Chenette, Ivan
Hammond, Susan Chenette, Thursday, November 23, 1978, W.H. 8.30 p.m.
Next University of Toronto Concert Choir concert: Sunday, March
25, 1979, 3 p.m. MacMillan Theatre.